

Native Plants for Landscaping



Landscaping with wildflowers adds beauty and, just as importantly, takes away some of the time, effort, chemicals and water you usually put into gardening. Here's a list to the wildflowers useful in landscaping and the procedures involved in their establishment.

Information on site preparation, establishment and maintenance is geared for naturalized prairie plantings, though it's useful to home gardeners as well. The species listed are adapted to growing in full sun. The list is certainly not comprehensive, but does include some of the more popular wildflowers and those commercially available.

This is not a complete guide to wildflower establishment; you'll find more specific information in the references listed at the end, or by contacting a wildflower nursery.



WILDFLOWERS

The following species will provide color from May through October. All are suitable for plantings in full sun.

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	HEIGHT	COLOR	BLOOMING PERIOD
Wild Onion	Allium mutabile	1-2'	pale pink	May-June
Wild Onion	Allium stellatum	1-2'	pale pink	Sept-October
Lead Plant	Amorpha canescens	18"-3'	lavender	mid-June to mid-July
Butterfly Weed	Asclepia tuberosa	1-2'	red-orange	mid-June to mid-August
Aster	Aster spp.	2-4'	white, blue, purple	August-October
Cream Wild Indigo	Baptisia leucophaea	1-2'	cream	May
Blue Wild Indigo	B. australis	2-3'	blue	May
Tickseed Coreopsis	Coreopsis spp.	1-3'	yellow	late May to August
Larkspur	Delphinium virescens	1-3'	white	June-July

Shooting Star	Dodecatheon meadia	1-2'	pink or white	June
Pale Purple Coneflower	Echinacea pallida	2-3'	lavender	June
Yellow Coneflower	E. paradoxa	2-3'	yellow	June
Western Sunflower	Helianthus occidentalis	1-3'	yellow	August-October
Blazing Star	Liatris squarrosa or cylindracea	1-3'	purple	July-August
Bergamot	Monarda fistulosa	2-3'	lavender	July
Missouri Evening Primrose	Oenothera macrocarpa	less than 12"	yellow	June
Beardtongue	Penstemon spp.	1-2'	white, purple	April-June
White Prairie Clover	Petalostemon candidum	1-3'	white	July
Purple Prairie Clover	P. purpureum	1-3'	purple	July
Prairie Phlox	Phlox pilosa	1-2'	rose-purple	May
Wild Sweet William	Phlox spp.	1-2'	rose-purple	May
Blackeyed Susan	Rudbeckia hirta	1-3'	yellow	June
Missouri Coneflower	R. missouriensis	1-2'	yellow	July
Blue-eyed Grass	Sisyrinchium campestre	8-10"	blue	May
Goldenrod	Solidago spp.	1-3'	gold	August-October
Goatsrue	Tephrosia virginiana	1-2'	creamy pink	June
Spiderwort	Tradescantia ochiensis	2-3'	blue	May-June
Rose Verbena	Vervena canadensis	18-24"	purple	April-November
Swamp Milkweed	Asclepia incarnata	2-4'	rose	June-July
Rattlesnake Master	Eryngium yuccifolium	3-4'	green-white	July
Ashy Sunflower	Helianthus mollis	3-5'	yellow	August
Maximillian Sunflower	H. maximilliani	3-5'	yellow	September
Rough Blazing Star	Liatris aspera	4-6'	purple	September-October
Gayfeather	L. pychnostachya	3-6'	purple	July-August
Grayheaded Coneflower	Ratibida pinnata	3-5'	yellow	July-August
Compass Plant	Silphium laciniatum	4-8'	yellow	July-August
Rosin Weed	S. integrifolium	4-6'	yellow	July-August
Prairie Dock	S. terebinthinaceum	3-6'	yellow	July-September

GRASSES

COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	HEIGHT	LBS./ACRE (SUGGESTED SEEDING RATE)	
Buffalo Grass	Buchloe dactyloides	6-8"	---	
Little Bluetem	Andropogon scoparius	2-4'	---	
Blue Gramma	Bouteloua gracilis	1-2'	---	
Sideoats Gramma	Bouteloua curtipendula	1-3'	4.0	
Prairie Dropseed	Sporobolus heterolepis	1-2'	1.0	
Big Bluestem	Andropogon gerardii	3-8'	4.0	
Switchgrass	Panicum vigatum	3-5'	1.0	
Indian Grass	Sorghastrum nutans	3-6'	1.0	

Seeds or Transplants?

Many of the listed species can be grown successfully in a planting from seed. Others are slow growers and do better when transplants are used. Whether to use seeds or transplants depends on a number of factors including the size of the area to be planted, cost and desired blooming. Generally most species bloom from seed the second or third year, so if you want quick results, use transplants. Transplants are generally practical in smaller areas (less than 2500 square feet). Initial cost is also a factor. (Wildflower seeds can range from \$35 to \$200 per pound.) Generally, seeds are better for larger, naturalized prairie plantings while transplants are suited for smaller, landscaped plantings and the home gardener.

Site Preparation

Proper site preparation will reduce weeds and increase chances of good seed germination, as well as facilitate planting. Site preparation should begin in the fall prior to a spring planting. For larger area, existing vegetation can be removed by fall plowing (if erosion is not a problem) and spring disking every two weeks until planting. If the area is subject to erosion or if fescue is present, vegetation can be controlled by two applications of a herbicide either once in the fall and again in the spring, or two weeks apart in the spring, followed by disking beginning two weeks after the last application and continuing every two weeks until planting. The application rate of glyphosate is 1 1/2 pints to 1 quart in 10 gallons of water plus surfactant per acre.

Seeding Rates (for naturalized plantings)

Wildflowers show up best in a mixture including native warm season grasses. An approximate ration is 60% grasses to 40% wildflowers at a rate totaling 10 to 15 pounds per acre. Seeds can be mixed with sand to help in broadcasting. After sowing, seeds should be covered by raking and rolling to firm the soil. For areas less than 2 acres in size, seeds can be hand-broadcast. Follow a design plan and put the seeds, by species, where you want them. Area greater than 2 acres are impractical for hand broadcasting and should be mechanically seeded.

Transplanting

Transplanting of bare root seedlings should be done in the late fall or early spring while the plants are dormant. Till the soil deep enough so digging is easy. Dig individual holes deep enough so the terminal buds can be places about an inch below the soil surface without bending or curling the roots. Potted plants can be transplanted anytime.

Weed Control

Because most prairie plants spend the first year establishing their root systems, they do not produce much above ground growth. As a result, a naturalized planting often resembles a weed patch the first year. In a large planting, weeds should be controlled by mowing to 6 to 8 inches two or three times during the summer. On small areas, hand pulling may be necessary. (But be sure you know which are the weeds!) Most of the weeds will probably be annuals.

Maintenance

A naturalized planting will begin to resemble a prairie by the second year. Mowing in late June may still be necessary to control annual weeds. Ideally, a prairie planting should be burned every three or four years beginning the third year. Burning should be done in the early spring (before

April 15), and only after obtaining needed permits. Fall mowing (November) with spot applications of herbicide to invading woody plants can be done where burning is not feasible.

By the fourth year, a naturalized prairie planting should be well established and will pretty much take care of itself for years to come.

For Further Information

- The following books provide additional information on growing wildflowers and establishing plantings.
- Paulson, Annie, Ed. 1989. The National Wildflower Research Center's **Wildflower Handbook**. Texas Monthly Press. This book is available for \$9.95 plus postage from the National Wildflower Research Center, 2600 FM 973 North, Austin TX 78725-4201.
- Phillips, Harry R. 1985. **Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers**. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill. 331 pp.
- Rock, Harold W. 1977. **Prairie Propagation Handbook**. Wehr Nature Center. Whitnall Park, Wisc. 67 pp.
- Smith, J. Robert with Beatrice S. Smith. 1980. **The Prairie Garden**. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison. 219 pp.
- Sullivan, Gene A. and Richard H. Daley. 1981. **Directory of Resources on Wildflower Propagation**. Prepared by the Missouri Botanical Garden for the National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc., St. Louis. 331 pp.

